

USAID Transform WASH

Case Study: Strengthening the One WASH National Program for effective WASH implementation, Aleta Wondo woreda, SNNPR, Ethiopia

Engaging government, building capacity, and strengthening implementation



Learning Note, September 2019



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USAID TRANSFORM WASH sets out to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) outcomes in Ethiopia by increasing access to and sustained use of a wide spectrum of affordable WASH products and services, with a substantial focus on sanitation.

It does so by transforming the market for low-cost quality WASH products and services: stimulating demand at community level, strengthening supply chains and building the enabling environment for a vibrant private market.

USAID TRANSFORM WASH is a USAID-funded project implemented by PSI, SNV, Plan International, and IRC. The consortium is working closely with government agencies - including the Ministry of Health, the National WASH Coordination Office and Regional governments.

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The objective of this learning note is to document the process and early results of the capacity building activities of the Transform WASH program, so that lessons can be identified and the approach can be improved and refined.

Author:

Tereza Nega, IRC WASH, Kassahun Bedane, SNV and Hayleyessus Teffera, OOWNP

Reviewers:

Michael Beyene, SNV; Fasika Ayalew, SNV; and Monte Achenbach, USAID Transform WASH

Editor:

Peter Feldman, IRC WASH

Design and layout:

Tereza Nega, IRC WASH

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Abbreviations

BoFED	(Regional) Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
CWA	Consolidated WASH Account
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
HEW	Health Extension Worker
KWT	Kebele WASH Team
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OWNP	One WASH National Program
PBMER	Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication
SMTWG	Sanitation Marketing Technical Working Group
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SWAP	Sector Wide Approach (also known as 'SWAp')
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WASHCO	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committee
WIF	WASH Implementation Framework
WSP	World Bank Water Sanitation
WWT	Woreda WASH Team
WWTT	Woreda WASH Technical Team
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

1. Background

SNV, as part of the USAID Transform WASH Consortium, leads the capacity building interventions for the sub-national Government to help it become more effective in decision-making, and more capable of managing and sustaining WASH activities. SNV collaborates with government structures at the Kebele, Woreda, Zonal, Regional, and National levels to assess their needs and challenges in implementing One WASH National Program (OWNP).

The Government of Ethiopia (GoE) has made a significant step towards operationalizing a sector wide approach (SWAp) through the OOWNP which aims to coordinate and harmonize efforts of all WASH sector actors under a single framework. In the SWAp, it is expected that WASH organizations operate under “one plan, one budget and one reporting system”; however, experience suggests that there are still challenges to be overcome.

Assessments have been conducted by different organizations to generate evidence on WASH capacity status at various levels. The World Bank Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) conducted a rapid assessment on the status of WASH coordination structures in four regions, Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia, SNNPR, and Tigray, during 2016. The assessment revealed that, at the Federal and Regional levels, there has been progress in establishing and operationalizing the One WASH Coordination Structure as set out in the WASH Implementation Framework (WIF). However, the assessment also identified areas to be improved such as:

- *Lack of uniformity on the level of awareness and knowledge about OOWNP concepts;*
- *Differences in implementation modalities and guidelines;*
- *Mixed understanding or confusion between the OOWNP and Consolidated WASH Account (CWA);*
- *Lack of Regional OOWNP strategic plans;*
- *Weak communication networks and systems of accountability between WASH sector bureaus and partner organizations; and*

Another assessment of the OOWNP conducted by SNV in 2017 found that there were some gaps in planning, budgeting, coordination, monitoring & evaluation, and private sector engagement. Based on the gaps identified in the assessment, USAID Transform WASH aims to build the capacity of sub-national government organizations using specially tailored packages of support. SNV is leading this effort.

Transform WASH engages with local government structures under the OOWNP - especially with the Woreda WASH Team (WWT) and Woreda Wash Technical Team (WWTT)¹. The WWTT supports Kebele WASH Teams (KWTs), the lowest level of local government's WASH administration. The responsibility of the WWT is to coordinate and oversee the progress of planned WASH activities – a role largely carried out by the WWTTs, who provide technical support to KWTs and WASHCOs. The KWT reports to, and passes on matters that need decision-making, to the WWT. In addition to these teams, there is a Sanitation Marketing Technical Working

¹ According to the WIF, WWTTs are comprised of the Woreda Administrator (Chair of the team), and the heads of Water, Education, Health, Finance, Women and Agriculture Offices. The WWTT is comprised of technical experts from

these same offices. The KWT is made up of the Kebele Chairperson, School Principal, Health Extension Worker, and Health Post heads.

Group (SMTWG) which collaboratively plans and implements sanitation marketing efforts at the Woreda level.

SNV follows an iterative approach to capacity building, rather than delivering one-off trainings. Once a certain training target has been achieved, each capacity building plan is reviewed to determine if the identified skills are being performed, and adjustments in the training program are made to fill in any gaps.

The overall goal of SNV's intervention is that government is able to fully support and champion proven WASH models and approaches. Intermediate results under this intervention include increased WASH governance and management capacity at subnational level, WASH sector policies strengthened, government staff capable of implementing OWP activities, and WASH teams at sub-national level that are able to provide sustainable WASH products and services.

2. Objective

The objective of the case study of Aleta Wondo Woreda in SNNPR is to document the process and results of the capacity building activities of the Transform WASH Project so that lessons can be identified and the approach can be improved, refined and scaled up.

Data were collected from document reviews and key informant interviews on how SNV facilitated capacity building at the sub-national level to improve OWP and Sanitation Marketing implementation. Data were then analyzed and key themes, insights and recommendations were drawn out.

The lessons will hopefully be of use to others involved in government capacity building activities to improve WASH governance and management capacity. The following learning questions were used to guide reflection:

- *What trainings were given, how were they selected and did they deliver the expectations?*
- *What changes have the trainings had on their day-to-day activities and on the performance of the WWT and WWTT?*
- *How has it changed sanitation marketing approaches and implementation?*
- *What barriers have been identified that hamper progress in building capacity, and what are some of the ways to overcome them?*
- *What are the key learnings that help improve the capacity building activities?*



Mr. Male Matie from SNNPR Health Bureau giving a closing remark at a ToT training

3. Methodology

- Review project documents such as quarterly progress reports, training reports, supportive supervision reports, and training history data.
- Interview key informants; Woreda WASH Teams, Woreda WASH Technical Teams, Regional Health Bureau and Regional project staff.
- Review and analyze data and draw out key themes and insights.
- Develop conclusions and recommendations.

4. Capacity building activities

This section discusses the capacity building process led by SNV, including the trainings provided in Aleta Wondo, and reflections by members of the WWT.

4.1. Preparatory work

WASH sector capacity assessment workshops were held with participation from Regional, Zonal, Woreda, and Kebele levels to identify capacity gaps, needs, and priorities in terms of WASH planning, institutional arrangements, implementation capacity, financing, monitoring and program evaluation.

Using the assessment information, SNV developed WASH capacity building guidelines for the project that integrated with national WASH sector development plans. A capacity development action plan was then prepared to guide implementation.

Following this, SNV identified and prioritized capacity building activities to provide the trainings to Regional, Zonal and Woreda WASH teams.

4.2. Popularization of WASH Sector Policies, Strategies and Guidelines

The GoE has worked hard to develop policies, strategies and guidelines to help facilitate implementation within the WASH sector. These include the WASH Implementation Framework (WIF), One WASH National Program (OWNP), and the National Sanitation Marketing Guidelines. However, these national documents have not yet been fully implemented at the Regional or lower levels

The objective of this documents popularization workshop was to strengthen the capacity of WWT and KWT members by improving their understanding of WASH implementation policies, strategies and guidelines so that they are better able to support planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects. This has helped WASH teams at all levels to better align their plans and implementation efforts.

4.3. Training on Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PBMER)

This training was given to Regional, Zonal and Woreda WASH teams who were tasked with cascading the training to the Kebele level. The training covered basic concepts, practical cases, and ways to overcome PBMER challenges. The training focused on WASH sector planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and gender mainstreaming. Once completed, the trainees from Regional, Zonal and Woreda WWTTs successfully cascaded the training to Kebele Development Committee members made up of Health Extension Workers, School Principals, Kebele Chairman, the Women and Child Affairs office, and the heads of Health Centers. The general objective of the training was to maximize the effectiveness of WASH

project implementation and to help ensure sustainability.

4.4. Training on Procurement, Contract Administration & Financial Management

Training on procurement, contract administration, and financial management was given to improve procurement and bidding processes, and project implementation. The goal was to improve budget management and expenditure, as well as to improve construction timelines of water schemes and sanitation facilities at the community, health post and school levels. SNV delivered the training to Regional, Zonal and Woreda WASH teams, and followed up with additional coaching and technical support.

4.5. Training on Sanitation Marketing and Woreda Sanitation and Hygiene Action Plan Development

The purpose of this training was to create a common understanding of sanitation marketing principles and design approaches among key actors, including Woreda Health Offices, TVETs, Food Security & Job Creation Agency, Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), and the private sector. The training focused on business models, establishing markets for low-cost and quality sanitation products and services, and promotional approaches used by Transform WASH. Designing a Woreda sanitation plan with a sanitation marketing focus was also a stated purpose of the training.

The training sought to establish a common understanding among key stakeholders on sanitation business models, sanitation product options and services, and promotional approaches. It also sought to align Transform WASH with the National

Sanitation Marketing Guidelines and Regional sanitation marketing initiatives.

4.5.1. Consultative meeting and exposure visit on Sanitation Marketing implementation

The major objective of the consultative meeting held with the WWT and WWTT including the Woreda SMTWG was to identify challenges and opportunities, to enhance demand creation and supply chain development so as to improve access and use of improved WASH products and services and to develop an action plan to strengthen enabling environment in sanitation marketing. The exposure visit was conducted in Shashogo Woreda, and was followed by discussions with manufacturers, sales agents, HEWs and beneficiaries. Challenges and opportunities were identified, and action points were set for the respective stakeholders in order to strengthen the local enabling environment and to improve demand creation activities as well as the supply chain.



Supervision visit at Aleta wondo woreda

The key gaps identified were:

- *Lack of integration between WWTs and the SMTWG;*
- *Lack of regular follow-up and technical support from partners;*
- *Limited number of organized manufacturers and sales agents;*

- Poor integration among HEWs, VSLA facilitators, and manufacturers;
- Lack of organized data on production and sales of products at manufacturers
- Lack of clear data on the amount of saving and loan at the saving group facilitators;
- Infrastructure problems (e.g., road access and water supply) which affects product quality;
- Limited sensitization and demand creation at community level, led by HEWs;
- Inadequate support from Kebele officials on demand creation and other sanitation marketing issues; and
- Poor access to financing for manufacturers who want to produce sanitation products.

Key actions agreed upon were:

- Strengthen integration among WWT and SMTWG, Kebele WASH teams, sales agents, manufacturers and business enterprises to strengthen the enabling environment;
- WWTs should provide regular follow-up and technical support;
- Commitment of woreda staff to implement the action plan;
- Increase number of organized manufacturers and sales agents within the Woreda;
- Enhance collaboration among HEWs, sales agents, manufacturers, VSLA facilitators and VSLA members.
- Provide capacity building training on models of sanitation marketing to the woreda SMTWG and manufacturers by Transform WASH
- Improve data keeping by manufacturers and VSLA facilitators
- Improve and enhance demand creation within the community, particularly by HEWs, using Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) approaches.
- Strengthen the linkage and support through using existing health and Kebele structures, such as the Women and Health Development Armies which helps to improve and enhance demand creation and supply chain development.
- Enhance woreda leadership role in demand creation.

Table: Data on Capacity Building Trainings in Aleta Wondo Woreda

No.	Type of Training	Dates	Participants		
			Male	Female	Total
1	WASH Policy popularization	01/06/2017	7	0	7
2	Cascading of policy at Woreda level	01/07/2017	35	29	64
3	Procurement, Contract Administration & Financial Management	22-26/9/2017	4	0	4
4	Training of Trainers on PBMER	23-27/2/2018	10	1	11
5	Cascading of PBMER to Woreda level	01/04/2018	41	30	71
6	Sanitation Marketing concepts and Woreda Sanitation Plan preparation	27-29/03/2018	7	0	7
Total			104	60	164

4.6. Follow up and technical support for Woreda WASH Teams

Regular follow up was done in person and through phone calls after the capacity building activities were delivered. The aim was to check results achieved by the capacity building activities, and to provide technical support and coaching.

The follow up also sought to determine whether the trainees' day-to-day activities had changed as a result of the capacity building effort. This process of follow up and coaching will continue throughout the project.

5. Preliminary Results

5.1. Coordination and integration of WWT and WWTT

Coordination among the Woreda level WASH organizations has been strengthened. The Woreda has revitalized the WWT and WWTT and has started to conduct regular meetings and supervision. The WWT has signed an MoU which clearly outlines roles and responsibilities. Also, a Woreda WASH Strategic Plan has been developed. The coordination among the WWT and WWTT members has become stronger since the training.

According to Mr. Teshager Yilma, Deputy Head of the Health Office, integration among the WASH team is now significantly stronger. WWT and WWTT now plan and implement jointly, with the WWTT conducting follow-up and supervision. The WWT and WWTT are working in a more collaborative way including coordinated use of human and material resources. Performance evaluation is also now done jointly. The 2018/19 annual plan was prepared collaboratively at the Kebele level, with the Woreda working together with Kebele administrations to do joint planning. A standard planning template

has been designed and all Kebeles are using it.

Mr. Teshager said that the WASH work has become more of a collective action. "I used to focus on the health aspect only, but now I see the whole of WASH work as mine. I also closely follow up on the gaps identified at the WWT meetings. I've also developed inter personal relationship with contractors. I'm also quick on presenting matters to the WWT for decision making; and they have become highly responsive too."

5.2. Procurement, Contract Administration & Financial Management

Tendering and procurement processes have been a big challenge for implementation of the OWNPN. This was largely due to two factors: delays in OWNPN budget release; and inefficient and delayed procurement. In addition, contract administration and financial utilization were weak.

The OWNPN budget release is reportedly often delayed; though no specific reason was articulated for this. Due to these delays, tendering was announced late, which in turn led to short implementation timeframes and failure to achieve the plan's targets or budget utilization. This situation resulted in reduction of the following year's budget. Tenders were advertised in newspapers at the Federal level, and the process often took over three months.

However, after the procurement, contract administration, and financial management training was delivered, the Woreda has been allowed to process tenders up to ETB 1 million. The authority to do so had been in place for some time, but the local Finance Office was not allowing tenders of such high value. Also,

the Woreda no longer waits for budget release to announce their bids; now they announce the bids as soon as their budget is allocated by BoFED. The award is made to the winning bidder as soon as the budget becomes available. The training has made the whole process clearer including the maximum value for tenders at the Woreda level. Tender notices are now posted at the Woreda level and it only takes eleven days to complete the process. Moreover, construction associations in the Woreda now have the chance to bid. Starting in 2017, all planned constructions were completed on time.

Explaining the change after the training, Mr. Ayele Tsegaye of the Education Office said "Now that I know about bidding processes and contract administration, I can argue with and convince the procurement specialists for better implementation based on facts. I read and understand the Bills of Quantity. We have finished constructing 24 school latrine blocks as per our plan, and the quality of construction has improved."

5.3. Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PBMER)

The WWT has begun to plan, monitor and evaluate more effectively. They prepare their annual plan based on the Woreda strategic plan prepared by the WWT. The Woreda has also begun allocating matching funds. At regular WWT meetings, WASH performance is reviewed against the plan. Procurement, contract administration, timely completion, and payment are critically evaluated by the WWT. Meeting minutes are properly prepared to document the process.

Mr. Teshager said, "Integration among WASH teams has increased, WWT plan and implement together as a team; we

are deriving our annual plan from the strategic plan we developed after this training. We are effectively evaluating financial and physical performance."

Mr. Abebayehu Kasaye, the Woreda Water Office Head, explains how he is doing his job differently after the training: "I've started to plan my day-to-day activities from the annual plan, I give attention to budget utilization. I have strengthened monitoring because without monitoring we can't achieve our plan. I have developed sense of responsibility and ownership. I am even planning ahead by supporting shelf document for water scheme construction with the study and design team that shall be used in case new projects come to our woreda."

5.4. Sanitation Marketing Action Plan development

Following a training on the National Sanitation Marketing Guideline, the Woreda has developed a sanitation and hygiene action plan. The Woreda action plan was created by the WWT together with members of the SMTWG. that include Health Office, Micro Finance Institution, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Food Security and Job Creation Agency. This action plan was also discussed at the Kebele level. However, the implementation result is not as encouraging as the results from the other trainings given. The SMTWG is not working in line with the National Sanitation Marketing Guideline and the different MoU signatories are not working collaboratively. Even though a slight change is seen on sales of latrine slabs; the demand for sanitation products is not significant and the improved sanitation coverage of the Woreda is still low. Much effort needs to be exerted from both the WWT and the SMTWG. The SMTWG needs to have a joint plan and an integrated

implementation and the WWT needs to monitor and evaluate the SMTWG.

According to Mr. Teshager, even though the Woreda Health Office is now working more effectively with manufacturers and sales agents, the SMTWG is not yet working collaboratively with them. Sanitation Marketing is still left for the Health Office to handle. The TVET and the Health Office now work better together, but the Food Security and Job Creation Agency and MFIs are not well engaged. A Kebele WASH action plan was also prepared but follow up regarding Sanitation Marketing implementation was weak. There are no regular meetings and the SMTWG does not seem accountable to any entity, even though an MoU was signed.

Mr. Yosef Hamaro, Woreda Administrator, noted that "in terms of improved access and use of sanitation products, 44 concrete slabs and 16 SATO Pans were sold after the training. 127,000 ETB was saved by VSLAs, and 8 slab manufacturing enterprises were established and trained, although only 2 are functional. The SMTWGs are not integrated and don't work collaboratively. Awareness at community level needs more work and the WWT needs to strengthen follow up by the SMTWG."

5.5. Follow up and technical support for Woreda WASH Teams

SNV conducts regular follow-up and gives technical support both in person and over the phone. Partnership and collaboration between GoE and the project are enhanced through this process. Consultative meetings were organized whereby Transform WASH's and other WASH indicators were reviewed and discussed. SNV has strengthened the WWT and plans to do the same at the Zonal and Regional levels for better results.

Self-assessment on Institutional Strengthening Index Performance Indicator is also filled quarterly by the WWT, which helps to assess the WASH sector blocks of policy, strategy and direction, institutional arrangements, program methodology, implementation capacity, availability of products and tools, financing and monitoring and evaluation and identify their status which contributes to fill the gaps.

Mr. Teshager Yilma noted that quarterly joint supportive supervision is now in place with SNV's support. He said "we evaluate performance against the annual plan in terms of budget and quality of construction, and we review the WWT meeting minutes. We discuss our strengths, which motivates us - and we identify our gaps and the way forward together. The joint review also creates the space to get the attention of leadership. On-the-job orientation also is given to us which helps us improve our work."

6. Key challenges

The following key challenges have been noted, and may be useful to others involved in capacity building at the national and sub-national levels:

- *It is difficult to avoid scheduling conflicts when trying to meet with higher officials for consultation and feedback.*
- *There is often a high turnover in members of the WWTs and WWTTs. This cannot be avoided. The project has learnt to build in refresher trainings to mitigate this issue.*
- *Even though there is progress on the timely release of OWNPN budget, it is still at times slow and may only happen towards the end of the year. The Woreda Finance Team claims the delay is from the Federal level.*

- The SMTWG is not integrated even though an MoU was signed, and there is a perceived lack of accountability by the group.

7. Conclusions



"After the trainings, financial and resource utilization has improved, procurement has become transparent and timely, contract administration is properly handled, community ownership has increased and water coverage has increased. Also, WWT meets regularly, minutes are documented properly and review meetings are conducted frequently. The WWTT has become strong with technical support; they work collaboratively and bring urgent issues to the WWT for decisions. Demand for improved sanitation has increased a bit, but we need to exert more effort on sanitation marketing because our improved sanitation coverage is still low." Mr. Yosef Hamaro, Woreda Administrator

The following are the main conclusions:

- Basic trainings were given to all the relevant members of the WWT and WWTT based on the finding of the capacity assessment. A well-documented training manual is provided. However, due to staff turnover, some existing members of the WWT and WWTT have not taken the trainings.
- Due to limited knowledge, skills and awareness the OWNP implementation was weak in terms of procurement, contract administration, budget and resource utilization, WWT monitoring and evaluation, and documentation.
- WWT and WWTT are now functional and active.
- Improved financial and resource utilization, procurement and contract administration, joint planning monitoring and evaluation have been fostered.
- Water coverage has increased, quality of construction has improved, documentation of meetings has improved, and community ownership has been strengthened.
- Demand for improved sanitation products has started to grow, and manufacturers are trained. However, they are struggling to begin implementation due to lack of financing.
- The SMTWG is in place but not as active as had been hoped, and not as well integrated – especially with the Job Creation and Food Security Agency and MFIs.
- SNV's follow-up and technical support is regular and strong, which has helped the WWT and WWTT to become more active in OWNP implementation.
- Due to high turnover of staff, institutional memory is poor and this is negatively affecting implementation.
- WWT and WWTT are using the training in their day to day work activities and they have increased personal knowledge and skill. They have become more accountable and responsible and feel more confident and motivated.

8. Lessons Learnt

The following valuable lessons were learned from this assessment:

- Bringing Regional, Zonal and Woreda level staff together in the same trainings has been very helpful. It has provided these groups with an

opportunity to discuss issues and develop solutions. Many of the challenges are being resolved simply by bringing people together, and thereby improving vertical and horizontal coordination and integration.

- Cascading of training from one level of Government to another has been an effective way to build internal capacity and strengthen the enabling environment at all levels. Empowering Regional staff to deliver the training at the Woreda level has improved ownership and accountability.
- The ongoing coaching, mentoring and technical support provided by SNV has been an effective way of building and sustaining momentum at all levels of government.
- The program has tailored its support to the needs of government partners, which in this case, was implementation of the OWNP, rather than only sanitation. This ensures the training is relevant and focused at the system level, which is a pre-requisite for sustainable WASH systems at scale. Feedback from key informant interviews said the program won so much support because it was supporting government activities.
- There were delays in signing the project agreement with the Offices of Health, Finance and Water at the start of the project owing to higher expectations with regard to overall project investment. There was also a perception that there were too few project staff and funds available for infrastructure. Expectations of government need to be managed more carefully.
- Refresher trainings and institutional memory are vital to cope with the staff turnover.

9. Recommendations

- Additional training needs to be given to new staff, and refresher training to existing staff. Also, technical staff who are directly involved with WASH procurement and contract administration at the Finance Office need to be trained.
- The SMTWG needs to be strengthened and should be more actively engaged with the WWT and WWTT. The WWT MoU needs to be revised in order to include the duties and responsibilities of SMTWG. The WWT should be responsible for monitoring and evaluating SMTWG.
- Strengthen existing follow-up and technical support mechanisms for the WWT.
- Regarding staff turnover, institutional memory should be strengthened through use of hand-over reports and better documentation generally. Training should be given to new staff by existing staff.
- Trained Woreda staff should be supported to cascade training to the Kebele level.
- Trained staff should submit training reports to their respective Woreda offices and should share the information with their colleagues .
- Feedback reports should be prepared and delivered to the WWT and other concerned bodies after joint supervisory activities take place - to help ensure that action points are well understood and carried out.